



May 2023

Health Update

As winter approaches, we are entering flu season. It is, however, most important to note that the symptoms and signs of flu and COVID-19 overlap considerably, and can be mistaken for each other. We urge you to take precautions against both flu and COVID-19 by getting vaccinated.

Symptoms that Flu and COVID-19 have in common

Fever / feeling feverish / having chills

Cough

Sore throat

Fatigue (tiredness)

Muscle pain or body aches

Shortness of breath / difficulty breathing

Headache

Chills

Fatigue

Runny or stuffy nose

Nausea/vomiting

Diarrhoea

Change/loss of taste/smell (more frequently with COVID-19)

Both flu and COVID-19 can result in complications which can be serious. These include heart attack, kidney or respiratory failure, heart/brain/muscle inflammation, pneumonia, secondary infections.

Those who are at high risk of developing complications as a result of flu include those with chronic conditions such as asthma, bronchiectasis, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathy, COPD and chronic renal disease.

Anyone who gets COVID-19, even if they display no symptoms or mild ones, can develop what is known as 'long' COVID, which can result in weeks or months of illness.

* The most effective way to stop yourself from passing COVID-19 on to others, including loved ones and those who might be at high risk of severe illness, is to get vaccinated and get your booster doses on time. To find a public sector vaccination centre near you, visit

<https://sacoronavirus.co.za/active-vaccination-sites/>

* In the private sector, some branches of DisChem and some pharmacies are also offering vaccination against COVID-19. Please consult your doctor for a vaccination site near you.

* To prevent yourself from catching flu, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) recommends that everyone get vaccinated every year. Staff medical aids cover flu vaccinations for members.

* If you test positive for COVID-19, please inform the COVID-19 Response Task Team so that we have a more accurate picture of the prevalence of COVID-19 among the DUT community. Please email covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za

* Smoking makes any illness with respiratory symptoms worse, and can delay or prevent recovery. We encourage you to quit smoking for the sake of your health today and in the future.

* The National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) recommends that you should only get tested if you display symptoms plus:

- Been in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 person;
- Travelled to a high risk country;
- Worked in or been to a healthcare facility treating people with COVID-19;
- Have a severe case of pneumonia with an unknown cause.

However, you should consult your medical practitioner or the DUT Clinic immediately if you display symptoms. They will determine whether or not you need to be tested for COVID-19.

TB (Tuberculosis)

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), every year in South Africa more than 56 000 people die from TB. This airborne disease is the leading cause of death in the country, but is both preventable and curable. We need to end stigma and talk about TB openly and honestly. Let's #EndTB.

These are some of the signs and symptoms of TB disease:

- Feeling sick or weak
- Fever
- Night sweats
- Weight loss
- Persistent cough
- Chest pain
- Coughing up blood

* Visit your closest DUT Clinic for assistance if you have these symptoms, or visit your usual healthcare provider.

Preventing TB, COVID-19, flu, colds and other infectious diseases

The prevention of many infectious diseases involves a few basic steps:

* Clean hands – Wash your hands with soap and water or sanitise them regularly throughout the day, and always after using the bathroom and before eating. Shaking hands and fist bumps can also spread germs, so choose other forms of greeting such as elbow bumps.

* Hands off -- Don't touch your face with unwashed hands. The pathogens (germs) that cause diseases can infect us via the nose, mouth and even the eyes, so rubbing your nose or eyes and other face-touching can spread infection.

* Breathe fresh air – Although we cannot always avoid closed environments, ventilation is an important part of avoiding infection. When indoors, open windows and doors, and wear an extra jersey to lectures, for example. Wearing a face mask is optional, but recommended for closed environments.

* Clean water – Drink water from safe sources, and avoid rivers and the sea, as well as fish and seafood from them, when contamination levels are unacceptable.

Cancer

Cancer is a disease in which some of the body's cells grow uncontrollably, spreading to other parts of the body, and destroying body tissue. While a cancer diagnosis used to seem like a death sentence, modern medicine has made enormous inroads into both preventing and treating cancer in people across the world.

The key is prevention and early detection, because the earlier cancer is discovered, the more treatable it is likely to be. Tell your healthcare practitioner if you notice anything that is not normal for you. Signs and symptoms are usually caused by something less serious, but if it is cancer, early detection can make a big difference.

There are over 200 different types of cancer that can cause hundreds of different signs and symptoms. What is important is to listen to your body, notice anything that isn't normal for you, and report it for investigation by your healthcare practitioner.

Some signs and symptoms of cancer

- Unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue
- Unexplained pain or ache
- Unusual lump or swelling
- Very heavy night sweats
- Unexplained bleeding/bruising
- A new mole or changes to a mole
- Loss of appetite/bloating

- Change in bowel habit, eg constipation or diarrhea
- Blood in your faeces/urine
- Unexpected vaginal bleeding
- Difficulty in urinating (passing water)
- Unusual changes in size, shape or feel of a breast or chest eg nipple or skin changes
- Coughing up blood
- Difficulty swallowing
- Croaky or hoarse voice that doesn't go away
- Mouth or tongue ulcer that lasts over 3 weeks

<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-symptoms>

Should you have any of the above signs or symptoms, do not panic, but do contact the Clinic on 031 373 2223 or your usual healthcare provider for a checkup.

Consult the DUT Clinic

Professional nurses are on hand during office hours at the DUT Clinics or call one of the numbers listed below.

IMPORTANT CONTACT DETAILS FOR ASSISTANCE

COVID-19 Response Task Team	Covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za
Hotline	031 373 3760
Clinics	
Isolempilo Clinic, Steve Biko campus	031 373 2223
Ritson campus	031 373 6010 069 597 4273
ML Sultan campus	031 373 2679
City campus	031 373 6002
Brickfield campus	031 373 3750
Indumiso campus	033 845 8913/8966
Riverside campus	033 845 8811/8812
Mental health support services	
Students – Durban	031 373 2266
Students – Midlands	033 845 8833

Yours in good health

COVID-19 Response Task Team